

American

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U.S. Calls for Stronger Asia-Pacific Multilateral Organizations

By Stephen Kaufman
Staff Writer

Washington — The Obama administration wants to strengthen the role of regional institutions, such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) forum, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the East Asia Summit (EAS), to promote more cooperation across the Asia-Pacific region to meet common challenges such as climate change, poor health and poverty, Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian Affairs Kurt Campbell said after meeting with Chinese counterparts during the weekend.

Speaking after the first U.S.-China Consultations on the Asia-Pacific Region, which were held in Hawaii June 25, Campbell said he and the Chinese delegation, led by Vice Foreign Minister Cui Tiankai, had spent much of their time discussing the role of Asian multilateral institutions and how they can be used to allow Asia-Pacific countries and others such as India and the United States to “more effectively collaborate” on regional challenges.

“We recognize that those institutions, like the East Asia Summit, which the United States is joining, and the ASEAN Regional Forum, are going to be playing a more important role in the years ahead. And we think it is very important that there is greater collaboration among the key nations,” Campbell said.

The consultations in Hawaii are an outcome of the third U.S.-China strategic and economic dialogue, which was held May 8-10 in Washington, and Campbell said the Hawaii discussions were aimed at “obtaining a better understanding of each other’s intentions, policies and actions toward the Asia-Pacific region.”

The two countries discussed each other’s objectives for the 18th ASEAN Regional Forum, which is scheduled to be held in Bali, Indonesia, July 16-23, as well as the upcoming East Asia Summit, which will also be held in Bali in October, and the Pacific Island Forum, which will be held in New Zealand in September.

Campbell said it will be important that the upcoming multilateral sessions highlight where the United States, China and other countries can “very clearly articulate areas of cooperation on issues,” such as the need to prepare and respond to disasters.

“One of the things that we saw in the aftermath of the tragedy in Japan is that better preparations are possible among all the Asia-Pacific countries to better and more rapidly respond to a crisis such as the earthquake,” he

said.

There are also opportunities to cooperate militarily against the common challenge of piracy, he said.

Campbell said the United States is an Asia-Pacific country “with an abiding national interest in peace, stability and prosperity in the region,” and it welcomes “a strong, prosperous and successful China that plays a greater role in regional and world affairs.”

He also said greater transparency and more dialogue between the United States and China will help fulfill President Obama and President Hu’s commitment to building a positive, cooperative and comprehensive relationship for the 21st century.

State Department Calls for New Assault Against Human Traffickers

By Charlene Porter
Staff Writer

Washington — Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton celebrated a decade of progress to liberate victims of human trafficking at the same time she promised that the efforts of the next decade must deliver greater results in ending 21st-century slavery.

The secretary’s remarks came June 27 with the release of an annual State Department assessment of trafficking in persons (TIP) activities in 180 countries.

“Today police officers, activists and governments are coordinating their efforts so much more effectively,” Clinton said, as nations have acted to pass laws to effectively prosecute traffickers. “Thousands of victims have been liberated around the world,” she said to a Washington audience of activists, ambassadors and governmental officials engaged in the issue.

But country-by-country analysis finds that traffickers are using advances in communication and transportation to continually expand their enterprises, and more action is needed, Clinton said. Traffickers make false promises of opportunity and advancement to lure innocents away from their homes in rural villages, transporting their victims to cities or other countries and forcing them into brothels or sweatshops.

“We now see that more human beings are exploited than before,” Clinton said. “There are as many as 27 million men, women and children.” That total includes victims being held in several different forms of involuntary servitude, whether for the purposes of sex, bonded labor, forced labor or domestic servitude.

Recognition of human trafficking as a criminal activity meriting strong international action dates back to 2000 and the adoption of the Palermo Protocols. In the United States, the next action came with adoption of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act, signed by former President Bill Clinton and promoted by then-first lady Hillary Clinton.

The first decade of the campaign against modern-day slavery focused on developing legal tools and immigration policies that allow prosecution of traffickers and protection of their victims. Now the director of the State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, Ambassador Luis CdeBaca, says the next decade must be about delivering on the legal framework that nations have erected.

"There's been a lot of advances in the last few years, but we are concerned that the number of victims identified and the number of traffickers being prosecuted has flattened out around the world," CdeBaca said. "And that trend needs to go back into an increase."

The global number of prosecutions and convictions has gone from almost 3,000 convictions in 2008 to 3,600 convictions in 2010, according to the TIP report.

While he looks forward to a new surge in the campaign against human trafficking, CdeBaca says the achievements so far can't be overlooked. "The fight has changed governments, with almost 150 signatories to the U.N. protocol, and 130 countries with comprehensive laws," CdeBaca said.

The United States is also one of the countries assessed for its record in human trafficking. While it is placed in the highest category — Tier One, countries that are fully compliant with the Trafficking Victims Protection Act — officials said the United States, like other countries, must do more. Officials suggest that a new tactic in the campaign will be to make developed-world corporations and consumers aware of their responsibility to ask questions about labor practices along the entire manufacture and delivery chain of products they buy and insist upon guarantees that fair labor practices are in place at every step.

Ten Human Rights Heroes received accolades from State Department officials and other assembled dignitaries for the strides they had taken in their own countries to address human trafficking. As prosecutors, activists and social workers, the honorees were all working to help the victims of this crime or prosecute its perpetrators.

EU, U.S. Partner to Secure Global Supply Chain

Washington — The United States remains committed to working with the international community to ensure the safety and resilience of world trade, the U.S. secretary of homeland security told an international commerce panel in Brussels.

Secretary Janet Napolitano met with officials in Brussels June 23 to confirm the United States' and the EU's shared commitment to improve the security of the global supply chain.

"The very nature of travel, trade and commerce in our networked world means that a vulnerability or gap in one part of the chain can have implications thousands of miles away," Napolitano told the World Customs Organization (WCO) Council.

The enhanced international cooperation includes building networks and adopting consistent screening standards to improve the coherence and cost effectiveness of commerce. Napolitano said that citizens and businesses around the world rely on global trade each day, and securing ships and planes "carrying everything from petrochemicals and car parts to grains and tulips" will strengthen the system. She also added that collaboration efforts will protect the integrated global supply chain from not only targeted attacks, but also natural disasters.

"Threats to the global supply chain transcend national borders and affect the security and economic prosperity of the entire international community," said Napolitano. "We are committed to continuing to work with our international partners to achieve our shared goal of increased security, efficiency and resiliency for the global supply chain."

The secretary joined European Commission Vice President for Transport Siim Kallas, European Commissioner for Home Affairs Cecilia Malmström and European Commissioner for Taxation and Customs Union, Audit and Anti-Fraud Algirdas Semeta in signing a joint statement emphasizing the importance of their ongoing collaboration to ensure the security, efficiency and resiliency of the global supply chain.

Napolitano met with WCO Secretary-General Kunio Mikuriya to review Program Global Shield, an operation to stop the trade of bomb-making materials. The program includes 70 nations working to stop terrorists and other criminals from smuggling chemicals to create explosive devices.

"The results of Global Shield are clear proof of the value of international collaboration, which is a powerful tool in our efforts to protect the global supply chain, combat

illicit trade and ensure the safety of society,” said Mikuriya. “Effective use of risk management by customs and law enforcement officials has enabled countless lives to be saved and costly disruptions to world trade to be avoided,”

Earlier, Napolitano spoke with her international counterparts in London and the Netherlands about protecting the global supply chain, and with International Maritime Organization (IMO) Secretary-General Efthimios Mitropoulos about efforts to make international standards more consistent and help ports recover from disasters and disruptions.

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